Jacket & Tie

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Jacket & Tie

by house_of_lantis

Summary

Will is invited to one of Hannibal's exclusive dinner parties. On a whim, he finally accepts and takes his relationship with Hannibal into a new direction.

Notes

This is my first Hannigram fic! I was trying to write a PWP but then it turned into a story and slow burn. I'm so obsessed with this show right now; I'm on a much needed break from Marvel.

Author's Note: The Eastern philosophy quote is paraphrased and attributed to writer Jane Harrington.

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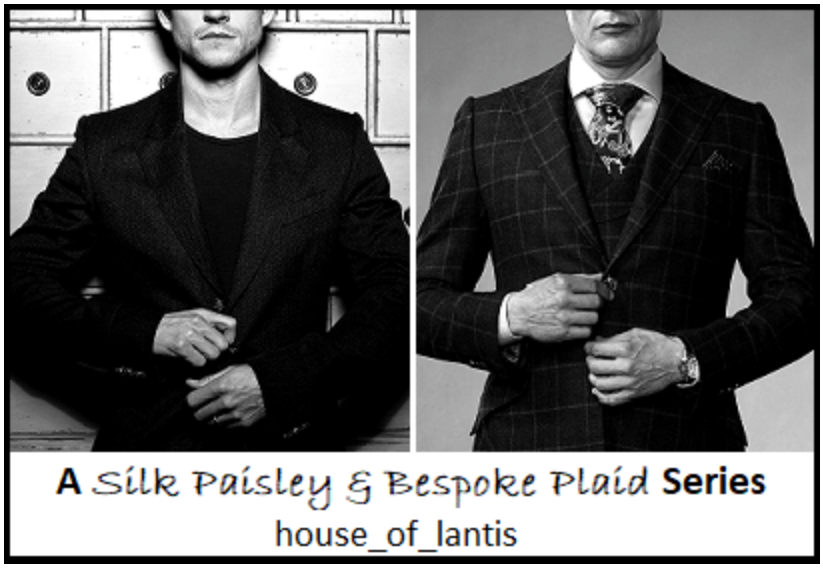

Will Graham's House

Wolf Trap, Virginia

Saturday

Will flipped through his mail - bills and junk - until he came upon the thick, white linen envelope with his name and address written in Hannibal's distinctive and stylish calligraphy. He tossed the rest of his mail on his dining room table and stared at the envelope, feeling its luxurious weight with his fingers.

Carefully, he opened the envelope with his nails and pulled out the invitation card.

Dear Will,

I would like to request the pleasure of your company for dinner on Friday, the twenty-third of March, at seven o'clock.

Your friend,

Hannibal

Also included in the envelope was a small response card and matching envelope in the same beautiful handwriting, requesting Will's RSVP and any particular food allergies or special needs. Will chuffed out a soft laugh to see that the return envelope was already stamped, fixed neatly in the corner, and addressed to Hannibal's home in the same distinct script.

Will leaned his hip against the kitchen counter, dropping the papers on the surface. His calloused fingertips stroked the fine linen of the paper and the fancy swirls of the letters. This wasn't the first time that Hannibal had invited Will to one of his special dinner parties. In the past, he had politely declined sitting at a table with Hannibal's no-doubt wealthy and colorfully eccentric friends. In the short time that he's known the good doctor, Will didn't believe that Hannibal would bother with boring or *insipid* dinner guests.

He had dined, privately, at Hannibal's table a few times already, but this was the first time that Will considered attending an actual dinner party. He wouldn't allow himself to think too deeply on any of the reasons why he was going to attend. Some things were better left alone in the darker corners of his mind.

He was going to need to get his jacket to the dry cleaners and iron his tie.

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F.B.I. Academy

Quantico, Virginia

Tuesday

Will leaned back against the edge of his desk, the darkened classroom giving him the illusion of being alone. There were a few times when he felt pinned in, overwhelmed by the number of trainees that attended his lectures. His most popular class was on serial killers, often filling all the chairs in the 50-seat auditorium, with trainees, and sometimes, other instructors, sitting on the stairs or on the floor during his lectures. He knew what people thought of him and the reputation that he had gained on campus, but when it came to his pure empathy and his knowledge, he was still considered an expert in this field.

“You have to remember that there is no genetic template of a serial killer. Serial killers are not all alike and they’re not driven by the same needs,” he said, taking a deep breath. “And even their need to kill isn’t common across all serial killers.”

He used his clicker to advance to the next set of slides. It was a pictorial spread of all of the well known serial killers in the last 50 years.

“One of the myths of serial killers is that they have an uncontrollable need to kill,” he continued, watching as a tall, male figure stepped through the open doorway, outlined in the shadows of the classroom entryway, approaching Will slowly and carefully. He recognized the figure as Hannibal, who gave Will a polite nod and stayed in the shadows. “Dennis Rader killed ten people between 1974 to 1991 but hadn’t killed anyone else prior to being captured in 2005. The Chesapeake Ripper kills in sounders, and until recently, there was a break in his kills for 18-months.”

“Professor Graham, why do you think that there’s been an increase in the number of kills by the Ripper after a long break?” One of the trainees said from out in the darkness.

Will watched as Hannibal cocked his head to the side, dark eyes reflecting the light from the screen so that the brown irises flared red for just a moment, a trick of light.

He cleared his throat and pushed the frames of his glasses up the bridge of his nose with his index finger. “He’s escalating because his usual distractions aren’t working for him anymore. Serial killers like Rader and Jeffrey Gorton weren’t social outcasts or misfits, they were deeply and strongly embedded into their communities, so they had significant others, steady jobs, families, friends, hobbies, sexual outlets, and other things to keep them distracted. Reliving past kills or being close to their trophies also kept them distracted. These distractions can feed a particular type of serial killer over long stretches of time. So there was a triggering moment when a serial killer will begin after taking a break.”

He turned off the projector and turned the classroom lights back on. Will took a long look at Hannibal, dressed in his usual three-piece suit of dark grey plaid, pale lavender shirt, and subdued dark purple and red paisley necktie and matching pocket square. Will could clearly imagine Hannibal’s point of view in getting dressed in the mornings, standing in front of a full length mirror as he carefully knotted his tie, the immaculate attention to the smallest detail, and how he kept his shoes clean and polished to a particular level of shine. Hannibal

was no man of leisure but he presented a certain image; and Will let himself wonder exactly what Hannibal was trying to hide so methodically and meticulously.

Hannibal's eyebrows rose in question and Will dropped his gaze, contemplating that his own red plaid shirt, blue striped necktie, and brown tweed jacket looked rather simple next to the impeccably turned out doctor. He used his own plain clothes as a shield, to hide away from people, and to enforce the distance that he needed. Perhaps they were both hiding something through their public presentations. He concluded that they should be allowed to keep their secrets.

"Your assignment is to write a 1500-word paper on what could have triggered the Chesapeake Ripper to begin killing after an 18-month break. Due next Tuesday. If you have any questions, my office hours are from 10 to noon on Thursday. Thank you."

Will turned his back on the class and began gathering his notes and shut down his Macbook. He wasn't the type to hang around after his lectures to chit chat with the trainees. He preferred meeting them during his established office hours and he appreciated that the trainees respected his time and his rules. At least they had learned to read his body language correctly and left him alone in the classroom.

"An enlightening topic, Professor." Hannibal said, leaning closely towards Will.

Will suppressed a grin and gave Hannibal a look. "Nothing that you don't already know. What brings you to my classroom, Doctor?"

"No doubt my presence is cause for some curiosity by your students," Hannibal said, stepping closer to him. Will was so used to it by now that he didn't even bother trying to move away.

He did look up to see that a few of the trainees hanging back in the classroom, giving him and Hannibal furtive looks. He scoffed to himself and thought that they needed more practice on unobtrusive observation skills. Will considered what the trainees must be thinking, wondering how their drab, socially awkward professor could be acquainted to a man who was obviously very well heeled. He scanned their glances and knew exactly what they were thinking. Was the tall, handsome stranger Professor Graham's lover? And how did Professor

Graham even gain and hold the interest of such a man in the first place? Sometimes, Will wondered the same thing.

"But my purpose for entering your classroom is to escort you to Jack. He requires both of us at a meeting."

"Sure," he said, swallowing back a disgruntled sigh. He would've preferred leaving early and going home to get some work done on his boat. "Come on, I know a shortcut across campus."

Hannibal nodded and fell into step with Will. "I must say that I was surprised and pleased you accepted my invitation to dinner."

"You know I'm not into parties, but I figured it was probably rude to keep declining your invites," he said, shrugging. Hannibal gave him a nod, graciously accepting Will's unspoken apology. "There's only so many times a friend can say 'no' without -- kind of sends the wrong message."

"What message were you intending to send before you changed your mind and accepted this particular invitation, Will?"

They crossed the quad and Will led Hannibal through another entrance to a dull, concrete building. They stopped at the elevator and Will pushed the call button with his thumb.

"Just...thanks for the consideration," he said, looking at Hannibal briefly, entering the empty elevator car.

"Let me reassure you that gratitude is not required between us," Hannibal said, softly. "It is a small party, just close friends. I've also invited Alana Bloom to our dinner."

Will nodded, frowning slightly. *Our* dinner?

He felt Hannibal leaning closer to him and inhaling deeply, slowly. Will rolled his eyes and gave Hannibal an amused glance. “Checking to see if I finally changed my aftershave?”

“It doesn’t suit you,” Hannibal said, his eyes crinkling as he smiled.

“Then you’ll be happy to know that I finally bought something else, so you can quit sniffing me all the time,” he said, boldly.

The elevator doors opened to the lab floors and Will stepped out first, a smug smile playing on his lips.

“May I inquire as to which one you purchased?” Hannibal said, there was real interest in his carefully solicitous tone that made Will chuckle softly.

They saw Jack Crawford turning the corner, probably heading out to fetch Will himself. When he saw them, he waved for them to follow him as he walked down the hallway towards the labs in the opposite direction.

“You’ll just have to find out Friday night, won’t you, Dr. Lecter?”

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Hannibal Lecter’s House

Baltimore, Maryland

Friday

Knowing that turning up late for dinner would be rude, Will gave himself plenty of time to get to Hannibal’s house in Baltimore, factoring in potential Friday night traffic going north of Wolf Trap. By the time he arrived, with 20 minutes to spare, he was pleased to find parking

along the curb, just a few houses down, and he grabbed his necktie and the bottle of red wine, walking briskly towards the house.

He placed the wine bottle on the front steps and quickly made work of his tie, straightening his hair to the best of his abilities. He grabbed the wine bottle by the neck and took a deep breath, ringing the doorbell.

The subdued *ding-dong* of the bell chimed inside and it was only a few moments later that Hannibal opened the outer front door, a pleased smile on his face. Will could hear classical music playing from within the house, the voices of people as they chattered happily.

“Good evening, Will,” Hannibal said, stepping aside and opening the door wider for Will to step through. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

Will stepped into the wide foyer of the house, the hexagon shaped room brightly lit. He grinned at the round table in the center of the foyer, filled with beautiful blooms of seasonal flowers. The entryway reminded Will of a Medieval castle, with its inner double doors and the dark stone walls decorated with tapestries, and oddly enough, antlers mounted on wooden plaques. Will always thought that parts of Hannibal’s home, that he had seen so far, were a combination of tasteful severity and luxury.

“Good evening. Thanks, uh, thanks for inviting me,” he said, holding the bottle of wine. “This is for you.”

Hannibal closed the doors and turned to give Will a thorough look over. He reached up with his hands and paused. “May I?”

“What? Why?” Will said, taking a step back and frowning slightly.

“If you’ll permit me, I can fix your collar for you,” he said, kindly.

Will gave him an embarrassed grin. “Yeah, sure. I was kind of in a rush so I wouldn’t be late. Put my tie on while I was outside.”

He tilted his chin and allowed Hannibal to step closer, adjusting his collar and resetting the knot of his tie. Will dropped his gaze, ignoring the fact that he’d just offered his neck without a second thought, to look at Hannibal’s blue-black velvet dinner jacket. He wore a plain white dress shirt with another one of his beautiful silk paisley neckties in blues, blacks, and gold, and the matching pocket square. He let his eyes linger on the knot of Hannibal’s tie, then raised his gaze up to the masculine thrust of his chin, the full lips, and met Hannibal’s brown eyes. There was something in the way that Hannibal looked at him, covetous and *hungry*. He watched as Hannibal inhaled deeply, letting out a low chuckle as he smoothed down the lapels of Will’s gray tweed jacket.

Hannibal made a soft hum of appreciation.“Your aftershave is much improved. Is it Creed?”

Will wasn’t surprised that Hannibal recognized it. It was actually one of the most expensive purchases Will made for himself. Completely extravagant, but the pleased look on Hannibal’s face was worth the price he paid for it.

He refused to justify any of the reasons why he had spent a very awkward hour at the Bloomingdale’s at Tyson’s Corner, sniffing a wide range of high end aftershaves and colognes.

“The new one has a ship on the bottle, too.” Will grinned, looking away so Hannibal wouldn’t see just how affected Will was to Hannibal’s nearness. “Does it pass muster?”

“For tonight.” Hannibal murmured, taking the bottle of wine from Will. He looked at the label and gave Will an appreciative smile. “How lovely. A Chambourcin - and from a local Virginia vinter. We’ll save it for the next time we have dinner. It pairs very well with fish. Thank you, Will.”

“You’re welcome,” he said, relieved that Hannibal accepted his gift.

“Please, let me introduce you to my other guests. Alana is here and she’s been singing your praises,” Hannibal said, motioning with his hand towards the doorway on the right, leading into the living room.

Will took a deep breath, bracing himself for interrogation from the cusp of Baltimore society. He was never good at this type of social chit chat, preferring to speak directly and plainly instead of deciphering polite niceties. He didn’t want to be rude and he didn’t want to embarass Hannibal. But if Will allowed himself to think about it, he knew Hannibal wouldn’t invite him if he thought Will would embarrass him.

He stepped into the living room, watching the five people gathered together in a loose but comfortable circle by the harpsichord, all holding drinks in their hands. Alana caught his eye and gave him a wide, welcoming smile when she saw him. She was wearing a beautiful green dress, tailored to fit her perfectly. Will thought she looked classy, but Alana always looked classy.

“Our final guest has arrived,” Hannibal said, gaining their attention. “May I introduce Mr. Will Graham. He’s an instructor at the FBI Academy and a special investigator for the Behavioral Sciences.”

Will attempted his best smile, trying to keep the eye contact brief but not impolite. “Good evening.”

He could already tell that he had gained their collective interest, looking him over and taking his measure. God only knew what Alana had told them about him; and it burned him inside that he should even care what anyone thought of him. He stood, nervously, letting them peer curiously at him as they looked from his carefully combed hair to his dark blue shirt and tie, gray tweed jacket, and dark blue pants. He had made an attempt to polish his best pair of dress shoes, as well as brush his nails clean of motor grease. They scrutinized him, but they would never be so outright rude to question his presence, not under Hannibal’s roof.

“Will, may I present Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Ellen Komeda. Deputy Mayor, the Honorable Ronald Hogan, and his wife, Mrs. Cecile Hogan. And of course, Dr. Alana Bloom.”

Will shook hands with everyone, greeting them with his best manners.

“Will, I’m so glad you’re here,” Alana said, reaching up to give him a quick kiss to his cheek in greeting. He caught a whiff of her perfume, something fresh and floral; and in their long years of friendship, he realized that he had never stood close enough to her to know she wore perfume at all.

“Alana, hey,” he said, surprised by the kiss. “You look beautiful.”

“Thank you.” She ran her hand on his jacket lapel. “You cleaned up nice.”

Hannibal smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners as he examined his guests and found them acceptable. “I’m going to put the wine away and check on our first course. We should be ready in about five minutes. Will, may I get you a cocktail to start?”

“No, I’m okay, thanks,” he said, nodding to Hannibal. The last thing he needed was to unleash his nerves with alcohol on an empty stomach.

Hannibal stroked his hand along Will’s back and left the living room.

It felt like being marked, feeling the echo of Hannibal’s hand on his back. And clearly, in front of Hannibal’s guests, it was a marking of a sort. Like Hannibal was staking a claim on Will and that he wasn’t going to be chum for the circling sharks in the room.

“How do you know our illustrious Hannibal Lecter, Mr. Graham?” Mrs. Komeda asked, stepping closer to him. She was a petite woman with dark eyes and black hair cut in a severe blunt style, her voice pitched high and definitely blueblood Bostonian.

“Hannibal also consults for the FBI. He’s been an immense help in developing the psychological profiles of, um, suspects,” Will said, trying to frame his answer that was appropriate for polite society.

“Murderers and killers,” Mrs. Komeda said, delighted. “Oh, my dear, you don’t have to sugar coat it for us. All of us here understand the important work that you and Hannibal and our lovely Alana do to protect us from such frightful people. I myself write murder mysteries and Hannibal has always been such a wonderful fount of information into the mind of a killer.”

Will managed to keep his expression neutral; there was no doubt that Hannibal could access the mind of killers.

“It’s wonderful to have such a dedicated representative of our best law enforcement agency here,” Mrs. Hogan said, looking at him with interest. She was pretty with dark blonde hair and looked like a woman that grew up in the Midwest. But there was something “off” about her that Will didn’t want to focus on. It wasn’t the time or place. “My husband started his career as a police officer before switching to politics.”

The Deputy Mayor chuckled. “I might have been safer on the streets of Baltimore than in the halls of Annapolis.”

Will noted that the Deputy Mayor was an older man, at least a decade older than his wife, and while his suit was tailored and well made, he was a man who was now accustomed to a much softer lifestyle. Will wondered if it was the sedentary life of a politician or if it was his wife’s own design, keeping him pampered and distracted, away from her power plays.

“Will was a decorated police officer in New Orleans before moving to the FBI,” Alana said, cheekily.

“Tough city. That’s a tough beat,” the Deputy Mayor said, nodding thoughtfully. There was a tone of respect in his voice now that didn’t sit well with Will.

Will ducked his head, knowing what Alana was trying to do. “Thank you, Your Honor. Well, thank you. I’m, uh, I’m not a special agent with the FBI. I teach the trainees and consult on the side.”

“You must have an expertise that others don’t in order to teach the new agents,” Mrs. Hogan said, her smile turning suggestive. Will knew that she was checking him out and he quickly

dropped his gaze, looking at Alana and giving her a nervous glance.

"Cecile used to be a teacher before taking a leave of absence for our campaign," the Deputy Mayor said, giving his wife a warm smile. "You know the old saying - behind every good man is an even better woman."

"Oh, you," she said, laughing melodically and elbowing her husband in his gut playfully. She turned to look at Will. "You'll have to excuse him, he's always trying to butter people up. We're not campaigning tonight, sweetheart."

Will observed them, unobtrusively. It was obvious that their marriage was a strong partnership, but the cute romance was just for show. They were a team; and even though they weren't in public, they were still very much putting on a respectable performance. Will could tell that Mrs. Hogan enjoyed that her husband was in the public eye. And despite her role as a politician's wife, it was her iron core that fueled her husband's ambitions. Will was wary of her; she was soft and lovely on the outside, but he knew she was a predator. She was a woman who knew how to wield her husband's power for herself and entrapping partners for her own games and satisfaction.

The Komedas were also intriguing. While the husband seemed happy enough to let his wife run their social circle and stood by Mrs. Komeda with an attentive smile on his face, Will could tell that they were both sharks, always circling in search of new experiences and new people.

Hannibal seemed to lean towards a certain type if his guests were any indication of his preferred social circle. He did call them "close friends" and Will knew that Hannibal didn't take calling anyone a "close friend" lightly.

"So tell me, what is it like to get into the mind of killers? It sounds horrifying and strangely tantalizing." Mrs. Komeda said, looking Will in the eyes, unafraid. After all, what fear did a predator have when gazing at another? He knew that she saw him as one, someone like her, someone with *potential* to be more.

But Will was taken aback by her directness and he had to bite back his instinct to tell her exactly what it was like. He glanced at Alana to see her giving him a slightly guilty smile in

apology. Will was annoyed; he was prepared to have to talk about his work, but he hadn't counted on how much Alana would reveal about him to them.

"You mustn't let her fluster you, Will. Murder and mayhem are two of Ellen's favorite topics," Hannibal said, rejoining the group and quickly dispersing the awkwardness. "And dinner is ready. Shall we adjourn to the dining room?"

"I'm so excited for dinner, Hannibal." Mrs. Hogan said, looking up at Hannibal. "Won't you give us a little hint for what's on the menu?"

"I don't want to spoil the surprise," Hannibal said, offering her his arm as he led her into the dining room.

The Deputy Mayor offered his arm to Alana with good humor; Will wasn't surprised that Mrs. Komeda wrapped her arm around his, smiling up at him.

"Odd man out as usual," Dr. Komeda said, chuckling behind them. "Remember, darling, you cannot adopt Mr. Graham."

"Nonsense," she said, breezily. "I have every intention of adopting him." She gave Will a very direct and assessing look. "You must always attend Hannibal's parties from this night forward. We have so much to discuss."

"I'm not much of a party guest," he said, softly.

"Will. May I call you Will? You must call me Ellen," she said, delightedly. He gave her a polite nod. She was curious and friendly, but he knew that she was a cunning social matron and not someone to make an enemy of. "I feel that you and I are going to be new friends! No one ever wants to talk with me about the subject matter of my books. Well, aside from Hannibal but I know he just indulges me when I'm stuck on a particular plot point. But you're the real thing, aren't you, Will? We must simply become friends and have lunch so that I can ask you all sorts of annoying questions."

Will gave her a smile, watching the way her dark eyes glittered with glee in railroading him into her clutches. The dining table had an intricate centerpiece decoration, as well as tall candles appointed at specific points on the table. He noticed that there were discreet place cards with each guest's name at each of the place settings and he led Mrs. Komeda to her place, which was at his right.

Hannibal smiled as he stood at the head of the table, meeting Will's eyes as he took his place at Hannibal's right. He watched as Alana moved to her seat from him at Hannibal's left. Will considered what he knew about dining etiquette, which was not a lot, but even he knew that Hannibal had given him the place of honor at Hannibal's table.

Alana gave Will a quick wink as she grinned at him, Hannibal holding her chair for her as she sat down.

Will took his seat after Mrs. Komeda and Mrs. Hogan were seated, keeping his hands on his lap. He turned to look at Hannibal as he stood at the head of his table, looking at his guests with real enjoyment on his face. The two catering servers stood at the other end of the room, waiting for Hannibal's signal to begin the first course.

"I am pleased and honored to have all of you here tonight," Hannibal said, his full lips curved into a sincere smile. "And I hope that all of you will find pleasure at my table. Bon appetit."

Will couldn't hide his smirk as Hannibal finally took his seat, meeting Will's eyes with a long look. He dropped his eyes to escape Hannibal's gaze, looking at the place setting and the number of forks in front of him. Did the number of forks represent the number of courses? Will remembered to count from the outer utensil to the inner. At least one of them would be for dessert, probably the smallest fork.

Dinner was part performance and part exquisite flavors. The dinners with Hannibal in the past seemed commonplace compared to the dishes that came out of his kitchens for the dinner party. It hit on all of Will's senses, building one flavor on top of another, the sequence going from hot to cold and hot to cold, with an Asian pear sorbet in between. Will knew that it was to cleanse his palate so that the next set of flavors would have a chance to be explored.

Conversation flowed easily at the table, starting with complements to Hannibal on the quality of each course, with topics moving from past dinners and the patronage of the arts to Mrs.

Komeda guiding Will through a number of interesting discussions, not all of them on murder and mayhem. He asked her about her novels and her writing; and when Hannibal revealed that Will had published several journal articles and monographs, Mrs. Komeda insisted that Will give her the summaries of his recent works, and for the first time, Will enjoyed talking about his writing as a writer.

"Hannibal, I insist that you bring Will to Lenora's performance next month," Mrs. Komeda said, giving Hannibal an obvious command. "You have received your tickets for the opera house fundraiser, haven't you?"

"Yes. I wouldn't miss it for the world," Hannibal said, taking a moment to sip his wine.

"Oh, you don't have to--" Will tried to protest, but he knew it was pointless. He was very much in Mrs. Komeda's clutches and Hannibal's knowing smile at Will confirmed it. Even Will knew that he should just give in gracefully.

"Nonsense," Mrs. Komeda said, patting Will's hand. "Hannibal is quite generous in his patronage of the Baltimore Opera House and often receives two tickets. But he never brings a guest."

Will looked at Alana, who was watching him with a questioning expression. Her eyes slid to Hannibal and then back to Will. He tried not to read into anything on her face, trying to keep to his promise of not reading her too intently. But he could tell that she was very interested in this turn of events. And somewhere in her keen interest, Will could see that she was a little jealous. What he wasn't sure was if she was jealous of Will or of Hannibal.

"Will, you must attend. Lenora is spectacular and she's agreed to perform, one night only, as a special favor to me to help me with my fundraiser," she said, giving him a coy smile. "I would be very disappointed if you missed it."

He knew that there was no graceful way to refuse her. He cleared his throat and glanced at Hannibal. "If...if I'm not working on a case, then I accept. Thank you."

"Hannibal, you must host a dinner while Lenora is in town."

Will watched as Hannibal considered the request and then nodded to Mrs. Komeda. “It would be my pleasure.”

“And Will be invited, of course.”

Hannibal smiled at Will. “Of course.”

“Very well. My job is done,” she announced, giving Hannibal a victorious look, her smile edging towards smug and satisfied.

Will realized that Mrs. Komeda had just set him up with Hannibal. He gave another glance to Hannibal, who was watching him with a small smile. Will turned his gaze to Alana and found her still watching him, her gaze now very knowing and very aware.

He met Hannibal’s eyes again and wondered what he was thinking. It was obvious that Hannibal was agreeable to having Will at his table. In his personal life. And introducing Will to Mrs. Komeda and to the Deputy Mayor was definitely a calculated move on Hannibal’s part, but to what end? Will wasn’t certain. Alana was there to act as a buffer, a known and friendly face in the mix. But Will was self-aware enough to recognize that his relationship with Alana had changed since he started consulting for Jack; and given the right push, there could’ve been something more with her. He also knew that she looked at Hannibal in much the same way, measuring them both and determining which one of them was more appropriate for her. Will didn’t think that she considered that Will and Hannibal would be appropriate for each other until now.

As dinner came to its end and as the catering staff began removing the last of their plates and the conversations began to wind down, Hannibal returned to his role of the perfect host and thanked his guests for attending his table.

In the foyer, Mrs. Komeda gave Hannibal a kiss on each cheek. “Darling, you’ve outdone yourself this time. Thank you for a lovely evening.”

“It’s always a pleasure to have you at my table, Ellen.”

She gave him a sly look and tipped her chin down with a smile. “He’s lovely, Hannibal. I’m sure he’ll make a wonderful distraction. All work and no play…”

Hannibal, never one to be coarse, merely smiled benevolently at her teasing. “Will is a dear friend.”

Will pretended that he hadn’t overheard their exchange, buttoning his tweed jacket.

“Will, my boy, it was good to meet you!”

Will shook hands with the Deputy Mayor, who patted him heartily on his back, and with Mrs. Hogan, who slipped her card into his hand. He said his goodbye to Dr. Komeda and offered up his phone number to Mrs. Komeda, who promised him that she would call and arrange their lunch outing, much to Hannibal’s amusement. Alana gave him a warm hug, but no kiss this time, flicking her eyes to Hannibal with a small grin on her lips.

“Will, would you mind staying for a few minutes?”

He turned and looked at Hannibal, feeling a warm flush consume him. “Sure.”

Mrs. Komeda took Alana’s arm and laughed knowingly, both of them turning to look back at Will as they stepped through the outer front doors.

Hannibal nodded his head to his guests, watching as they made their way down the front steps, and closed the front door. He walked into the foyer and shut the inner doors as well, then turned to look at Will with an interested look on his face.

“I just have to thank the catering staff. Would you wait for me in the library? It won’t take me long.”

“Sure,” he said, looking at which doorway would take him to the library. “Uhh...I think I need directions.”

Hannibal’s hand caressed his back, turning him towards his left. “It’s through that doorway, past the staircase, on the right. I’ll be with you momentarily.”

“All right,” Will said, turning to look at him, and seeing that same look of pleasure and hunger on Hannibal’s face when Will first walked into Hannibal’s house. “Take your time.”

The library was a small room and it looked exactly like Will imagined. Green patterned wallpaper on the walls and a variety of skulls with antlers and an antelope head above the fireplace gave the room a European feel, kind of something found in a hunting lodge in the countryside. There were flowers in what Will presumed were crystal vases, a faint smell of wood polish and outdoorsy freshness in the air. Someone had already started a fire in the fireplace, giving the room a warm, orange glow. Only one lamp was turned on, making the room feel cozy and intimate.

Hannibal’s aesthetic choices were...unique. Weird. Thoroughly masculine.

He wandered around the room, looking at the art and history books stacked low on the table and touched the spiraling antlers coming out of the skull. Will wasn’t a hunter so he wasn’t able to identify the animal the skull belonged to, but he found it fascinating. And erotic. It reflected the predator in Hannibal and Will wondered if Hannibal considered him as prey or as equal.

The fire crackled in the fireplace and Will walked towards the warmth, looking up at the antelope head. It reminded him of the stag that walked through his dreams. The dark glass eye seemed to stare down at him and Will reached up to brush his fingertips against the rough fur on its neck. He let out a soft chuckle and lowered his hand to see Hannibal standing in the doorway, watching him.

He startled, slightly, and let out an embarrassed laugh as Hannibal walked into the room. “Sorry, you caught me, uh, touching the thing.”

“The Eastern philosopher, Yang Zhu, once said that when you touch a thing, you’re touching the whole of the thing, its mind, its spirit, its emotions,” Hannibal said, taking a step closer to Will. “May I offer you a nightcap?”

Will shook his head, even though he wouldn’t mind getting a taste of Hannibal’s high end whiskey. “Better not. I want to be sober to drive home.”

“You’re welcomed to stay the night,” Hannibal murmured, the corner of his lip ticking up with a smile. “I have more than enough space.”

“Are we really doing this?” Will said, his voice low and tentative.

Hannibal didn’t respond right away, but he took another step towards Will, closing the distance between them.

“Why did you accept my dinner invitation tonight when you’ve refused all the others?”

“I said that I didn’t want to send the wrong message.”

“You never told me what that message was to be, Will.”

“For always including me,” he said, seeing the reflection of the fire in Hannibal’s eyes. It was the trick of the light again, flickering red in the deep browns. “Even when I’ve been nothing but a jerk.”

“Especially so,” Hannibal said, amused. “But that’s not quite it, is it?”

“Why do you invite me when you know I was going to turn you down?”

Hannibal took another step closer to him and Will flexed his toes in his dress shoes, standing his ground.

“Perhaps I exist in a state of hope that you’ll honor me with your presence.”

Will grinned, shaking his head. “Well, you certainly know how to talk to a guy.”

“You smell delectable.”

Will met the challenge in Hannibal’s eyes and raised his chin. “Good enough to eat, Doctor?”

“Don’t tempt me,” he said, reaching out with his hand to touch Will’s face, smoothing his warm palm over Will’s cheek to his neck, following the curve of his flesh to slide his long fingers into the back of Will’s hair.

Will took a half step and pressed his lips chastely against Hannibal’s lips, feeling the firm plush of those lips for himself. A strong arm curled around his lower back while Hannibal’s hand took a hold of Will’s hair, pulling his head back to make a small adjustment, and took over Will’s tentative kiss.

A firm tongue slipped against Will’s lips and he sighed, parting his lips, inviting Hannibal’s tongue into his mouth to taste him.

He reached up to curl his hands over Hannibal’s arms, enjoying the velvety texture of his dinner jacket under his palms. The feel of his calluses against the smoothness of the velvet was erotic, intermixing with the sound of Will’s soft gasps, Hannibal’s quick inhales, and the fire hissing in the fireplace.

Will groaned into Hannibal’s mouth when he felt Hannibal unbutton his tweed jacket, a large hand sliding over the cotton of his shirt at his waist, and moving steadily up his chest. A

thumb brushed teasingly over his nipple and Will bit Hannibal's bottom lip hard as the heat of desire curled in his belly and in his hardening cock.

"You do tempt me, Will," Hannibal murmured, licking the small nick on his lip, his eyelids lowered as he met Will's eyes. "There are so many things that I want to do to you."

Will shuddered, nodding. "I *know* what you want to do to me."

"Are you seeing yourself from my perspective?" He said, lips curving into a smile.

"I'm not afraid of you."

Hannibal slid his hand into Will's jacket pocket and pulled out the card that Mrs. Hogan had slipped him. Hannibal looked at it and then at Will.

"Her blatant interest in you was rather rude," he said, the distaste clear in Hannibal's tone. "Particularly in front of her husband and my other guests."

"She's a spoiled child with an inflated sense of power who thinks she can play games with people," Will said, unimpressed and dismissive. "I don't find people like her interesting."

"Best to avoid getting caught on her lure," Hannibal said, tossing the card into the fire. Will watched it burn, feeling Hannibal's eyes on his face.

Will turned to look at him, measuring the possessive look on Hannibal's face. He considered whether or not it was worth it to have that level of possession focused on him. "Is this a personal victory for you?"

"To have you here with me?" He said, moving his hand to cup Will's neck again. He dropped his gaze to Will's lips and moved closer. Will could feel the warmth of his breath against his lips. "Yes."

Hannibal kissed him again, rough and merciless, tongue delving into Will's mouth and teeth nipping his lips in payback. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck, drawing him in closer until he could feel Hannibal's hard cock pressing against his hip. Will closed his eyes when he felt Hannibal's mouth moving along his jaw and kissing along his neck. He felt Hannibal inhale and Will couldn't help laughing softly as Hannibal smelled him again. Will stroked his hand over Hannibal's hair, finding it fine and soft.

"Is this going to be a thing?"

He sucked on Will's earlobe. "Yes."

Will moved his hands to hold Hannibal's cheeks and kissed him, taking control of it this time. He traced the outline of Hannibal's upper lip with the tip of his tongue and groaned when Hannibal impatiently sucked Will's tongue into his mouth.

When Will opened his eyes, he found himself on his back on the couch, propped up against the leopard print cushion, and looking up at Hannibal's face, the light from the fireplace giving him beautiful angles of light and dark.

"Slide your hands behind your back, Will."

It took a moment for Will to comprehend what Hannibal wanted, and he did, he felt the flush of heat on his face, his lower belly clenching and cock jerking under his slacks. He licked his lips and moved his hands under him, his fingertips brushing against each other.

Hannibal knelt above him, his knee pressed between Will's thighs. The couch wasn't nearly large enough to accommodate both of them, but Will didn't think that they would actually fuck on it. This was a prelude, an appetizer, foreplay. He knew what Hannibal wanted was to see Will on his bed, laid out for Hannibal to see and to touch and to taste, all at his leisure, and no place for Will to hide what he wanted in return.

He caught his breath when Hannibal's hands touched his thighs, moving them up his legs so that his palms converged over Will's cock. He framed and shaped the fabric over his cock, dark eyes examining the length and width of it. He gripped the fabric in his fist, trapping Will's cock against his belly, and ran the blunt nails of his other hand from tip to base, squeezing his tight balls until Will let out a hiss and thrust his hips into Hannibal's hand.

"Come on, Hannibal," he mumbled, looking at him. God only knew what was showing on his own face, but Hannibal looked like a starving animal that had just taken down prey.

"The anticipation should be savored," Hannibal said, his voice rough and low. "I'm going to take my time with you."

Hannibal's hands released him but then both hands moved to massage and caress him over his pants. Will dug his fingers into his tweed jacket, gripping it tight as he tried to get some leverage, pressing his cock against Hannibal's hands, trying to get the friction that he needed.

When Hannibal let him go, Will opened his mouth to whine a complaint but then found Hannibal's tongue tangling with his, sucking on his tongue, his lips, the weight of Hannibal's body pressing him into the couch.

"Stop teasing me," Will said, in between Hannibal's biting kisses. "Take out my cock and touch me. Suck me. Stroke me. I don't care. Just...come on, Hannibal."

"Do you think that it's going to be that easy?" Hannibal said, licking up Will's neck, puffing out a throaty laugh.

Will had pulled one of his hands from beneath him so that he could caress Hannibal's firm ass, moving between them to feel his cock. Hannibal grabbed his wrist, stopping him, and Will grinned up at Hannibal.

"Now, Will, please put your wandering hand back where it belongs," Hannibal said, amused.

“You’re enjoying this far too much,” he said, licking his lips and raising his head to press a quick kiss to Hannibal’s mouth. “You like seeing me like this, under you, begging, submissive.”

Hannibal smiled at him. “As much as you enjoy seeing me like this, over you, in control, dominant.”

Will chuckled, but he didn’t disagree. He moved his hand back under his back and moaned as Hannibal kissed him again, slow and deep and thorough, taking his time, his hands curved around Will’s head.

It was good, so good, and Will arched his neck as Hannibal started to rub his hips against Will, letting him feel how hard Hannibal was. He braced his foot against the slippery marble floor, the other wrapping around Hannibal’s thigh, and he moved with Hannibal, finally getting the friction he needed.

“What’s going through your mind, Will? What’s your imagination showing you?” Hannibal said, against Will’s ear, voice smoky and deep.

“Close,” Will whispered, panting. “Please, Hannibal. I’m so close.”

Hannibal’s hand stroked over Will’s head and he moved gracefully to his knees again, pushing away from Will’s body. But before Will could say anything to protest, he felt Hannibal’s hands on his waist, unbuckling his leather belt, and quickly undoing his pants.

Will watched, breathless, as Hannibal jerked down his pants and boxers, just far enough to be able to see Will’s cock, hard, darkened flesh, and wet at the tip. He watched as Hannibal cupped his hand in front of his mouth, spitting into his palm, and Will cursed under his breath because that was probably the dirtiest thing he had ever seen Hannibal do.

Hannibal curled his hand around Will’s cock and stroked him quickly, expertly, thumb rubbing around the head. He leaned down over Will, his hand braced against the arm of the couch, so that he could watch Will without anything getting in the way.

“Don’t stop,” Will panted, looking into Hannibal’s dark eyes as he thrust his cock into Hannibal’s hand. He closed his eyes, the sound of Hannibal’s hand slick and loud in the quiet room. “Don’t stop. Hannibal. Don’t stop, Jesus, don’t stop. Don’t--”

He turned his face against the cushion, but Hannibal’s hand grabbed his hair, tugging roughly and turning Will’s face back.

“Don’t hide from me,” Hannibal said, licking Will’s opened mouth. “Let me see. Let me see everything.”

Will could barely keep his eyes opened, but he peered up at Hannibal through slitted eyes, knowing that he wasn’t able to hide a damn thing, letting Hannibal see him, letting him have this first memory of Will, unleashed, helpless, and needing. This was Hannibal’s design.

And Christ, Will wasn’t going to last at all, and he didn’t care. He chased after his pleasure and groaned long and loud as he came, bucking his hips as Hannibal watched him, eyes possessing Will’s pleasure, lips curved into a smile.

He collapsed back against the couch, shuddering through the last of his pleasure as Hannibal’s grip changed to a slow and soothing stroke. Will was breathing through his mouth, trying to catch his breath. When he opened his eyes, it was to see Hannibal on his knees, reaching to undo his slacks and pulling down his briefs.

“Give me a minute and I’ll--”

“Stay right there, Will,” Hannibal said, reaching down to swipe his hand through the pool of come on Will’s shirt.

Will watched as Hannibal wrapped his hand around his cock, the other holding the ends of his dress shirt and tie up, showing himself to Will. He was uncut and more than average, dark and curved. Will let his eyes move from Hannibal’s cock and up to his face, watching as Hannibal’s lips parted, the sound of his soft gasps filling the room.

The way that he whispered Will's name.

In his imagination of how this would play out between them, it was never like this. That Hannibal would want to be seen; to show Will the parts of him that he held hidden under such tight control. The thrill of *reciprocity.* As Will finally recovered and calmed, he could focus all of himself on Hannibal now. The look of dark need on Hannibal's face; the low thrum of his grunts; and how rough he was with himself compared to how he touched Will.

When Hannibal came, he threw back his head and groaned, reaching out to hold onto the back of the couch. Will let out a soft moan of empathetic pleasure, imagining how Hannibal must've felt as Will remain unmoving as he watched.

Hannibal exhaled deeply and looked down at Will, flushed with pleasure. His eyes took in the state of Will and he reached down to gather both of their come, wiping his hand on Will's tweed jacket. Will chuffed out a low laugh of disbelief, pulling his hands from under his back. He raised his jacket to look at the glop of semen on the fabric.

"Did you just try to ruin my jacket? I like this jacket."

"I'll get you--"

"Don't you dare say that you're going to get me another one," he said, warningly. Hannibal narrowed his eyes and Will laughed again, falling back on the couch, his hands moving to Hannibal's thighs. He reached for Hannibal's still hard cock, enjoying the heft of it as he gave him a slow, gentle stroke. Hannibal closed his eyes and shuddered, mouth parting in breathless pleasure.

Hannibal grabbed his wrists and pinned them gently above Will's head, kissing his mouth with slow, languid licks of his tongue. Will pulled his wrists from Hannibal's hold, tracing Hannibal's face with his fingers, and running them through his hair.

“There’s only three weeks to the opera house fundraiser,” Hannibal said, his dark blond bangs falling loosely and boyishly over his forehead. Will thought it made him look even more handsome when he was unfettered. “I’ll need to introduce you to my tailor in the next couple of days. Can you be available with short notice?”

Will laughed, running his hand through his hair and then reaching up to grab the cushion under his head. “I can get my own tux, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s face didn’t change, but Will could sense his deep disapproval. “A gentleman should always have his own tuxedo, Will. I have a feeling that it will come to good use.”

“Seriously? We’re going to have post-sex talk about clothes?”

“Would you rather we had a discussion about *The Illiad* instead? I can accommodate you if that’s what you desire,” Hannibal said, snarkily. “After Achilles killed Hector, he lashed the body to the back of his chariot and dragged it around the battlefield back to his camp. Patroclus’s funeral was celebrated for nine days, and each day, Achilles dragged Hector’s body around Patroclus’s funeral bier--”

“Hannibal, that’s morbid,” Will said, looking at Hannibal.

“Achilles’s grief was so great over the loss of Patroclus that it was only with Zeus’s intervention that King Priam could have the opportunity to beg Achilles to return Hector’s body for a proper burial,” Hannibal said, stroking his thumb across Will’s bottom lip. “I could never be moved enough to show that kind of mercy or benevolence.”

Will laughed, closing his eyes and falling back on the cushion. “Jesus, you know what, Hannibal? I’ll take you up on your offer of a nightcap now.”

Hannibal was silent and Will opened his eyes, thinking that he might have gone too far. But Hannibal was giving him a soft smile, eyes that were still hungry but satisfied for the moment.

“Have dinner with me tomorrow night,” Hannibal said, meeting Will’s eyes. “Make arrangements for your dogs to be cared for.”

“Are you asking me to spend the night?”

“The weekend. Yes.” Hannibal continued to trace the lines of Will’s face with his finger tips. “And to meet my tailor.”

Will burst out into laughter.

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